

TRACK gaining momentum statewide and nationally



The next step in expanding TRACK into the construction sector is to develop career pathways that will give students credit for courses taken and possibly direct entry into industry training programs.

Since its introduction as a pilot program in 2013, the Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky (TRACK) initiative has gained the support of many school districts across the state and the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development. Now it has the attention of U.S. Department of Labor.

TRACK is a partnership between the Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) and the Kentucky Labor Cabinet created to provide pre-apprenticeship opportunities to high school students, giving them a head start on careers. The idea of the program is to employ existing programs already being taught in career and tech centers and create a certified program for students based on local industry needs.

In this pilot year, TRACK has included 13 high school technology centers in the area of advanced manufacturing. Because of its momentum and the interest the program has received from business and industry professionals in other industry sectors, the program will expand into construction technology during the 2014-15 school year.

As the TRACK initiative progresses, students ultimately will complete a series of courses requested by each participating business partner in order to receive their pre-apprenticeship certificate. Those courses are handpicked by the industries in accordance to their localized needs.

Students also will be credited with their hours already completed at the high school level toward their apprenticeship certification, much the same way as dual credit hours are issued toward postsecondary courses. The TRACK initiative will allow students at a sophomore level to enter into the program; an age once deemed unimaginable for any apprenticeship program.

"The idea of TRACK is directly related to a recommendation from a recent Southern Regional Education Board report on how





Students participating in the TRACK program will be credited with their hours already completed at the high school level toward their apprenticeship certification, much the same way as dual credit hours are issued toward postsecondary courses.



Because of the momentum and the interest TRACK has received from business and industry professionals in other industry sectors, the program will expand into construction technology during the 2014-15 school year.

to make Kentucky Career and Technical Education (CTE) a world-class system," said Dale Winkler, associate commissioner with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). "By utilizing the TRACK model of working directly with local business and industry partners, we would fulfil the need to offer programs most needed by those industries in a regional sense."

TRACK is the brainchild of OCTE Business and Industry Specialist Mary Taylor. She said never before has there been a program focused on getting high school students involved in an apprenticeship program.

"This really is a first for our state and I think it can become a model nationally by the amount of interest we've had and the number of businesses and schools that want to become involved," she said.

Taylor developed the program along with Mike Donta, deputy commissioner at the Labor Cabinet. He serves as the state's lead in apprenticeship and recently returned from a meeting in Washington D.C. where he spoke to the Labor Secretary's Advisory Council on Apprenticeship about the TRACK program.

Donta said council members along with Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Employment and Training Administration Gerri Fiala and John Ladd, Administrator of the Office of Apprenticeship were



TRACK is a partnership between the Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) and the Kentucky Labor Cabinet created to provide pre-apprenticeship opportunities to high school students, giving give them a head start on careers.

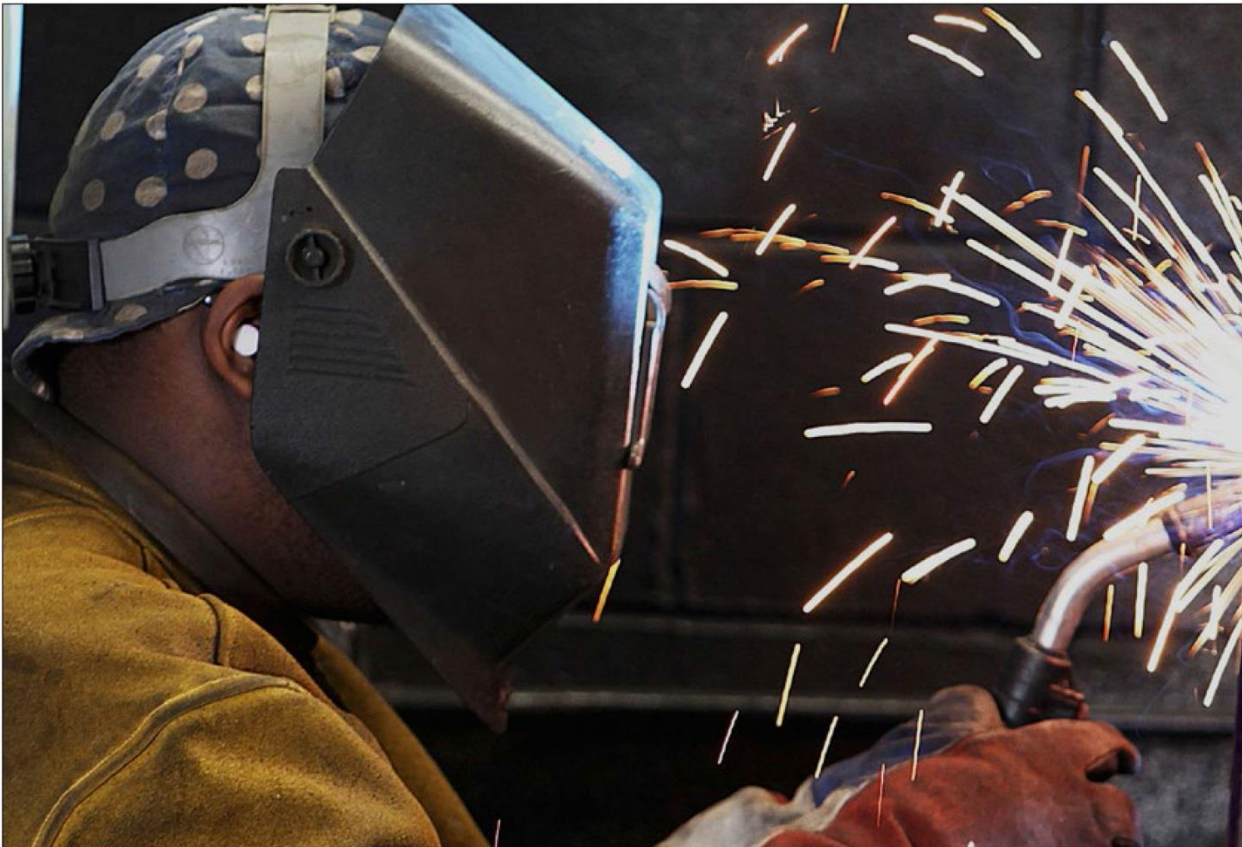


The idea of TRACK is directly related to a recommendation from a recent Southern Regional Education Board report on how to make Kentucky Career and Technical Education (CTE) a world-class system.

very positive in their remarks about the Kentucky program.

"The day's meeting focused discussions on youth involvement, partnerships to expand registered apprenticeship, involvement with the state technical schools and crediting pre-employment training to those individuals entering apprenticeship programs," he said. "I really believe the TRACK program stood out among the other presentations and I think this puts our program in a national spotlight. Considering our TRACK program incorporated all of the elements of the entire day's discussions, I feel we were a hit with the members of the council."

Donta also attended a meeting in which Labor Secretary Thomas Perez said the President Obama has included a tremendous increase of funds allotted for Registered Apprenticeship and wants to double the number of apprentices over the next five years.



The idea of TRACK is to employ existing programs already being taught in career and tech centers and create a certified program for students based on local industry needs.

The community college connection

As is the case on many fronts, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) continues to play an important role in apprenticeships as well as being a big supporter of secondary CTE students.

Landon Garrison is a prime example of what a student can achieve by following a CTE pathway at the secondary level and moving on to community college by way of an apprenticeship program. He attended the Mason County Area Technology Center studying machine tool technology. From there he went to work at a local manufacturing facility, Stober, where he entered their apprenticeship program. This sent him back to school, this time at the Maysville Community and Technical College (MCTC) to complete the classroom portion of the apprenticeship. Today, Garrison is a manufacturing engineer.

He, along with others involved in the apprenticeship program at Stober and from MCTC, spoke at a recent gathering in Frankfort of workforce development officials and personnel from

across the state.

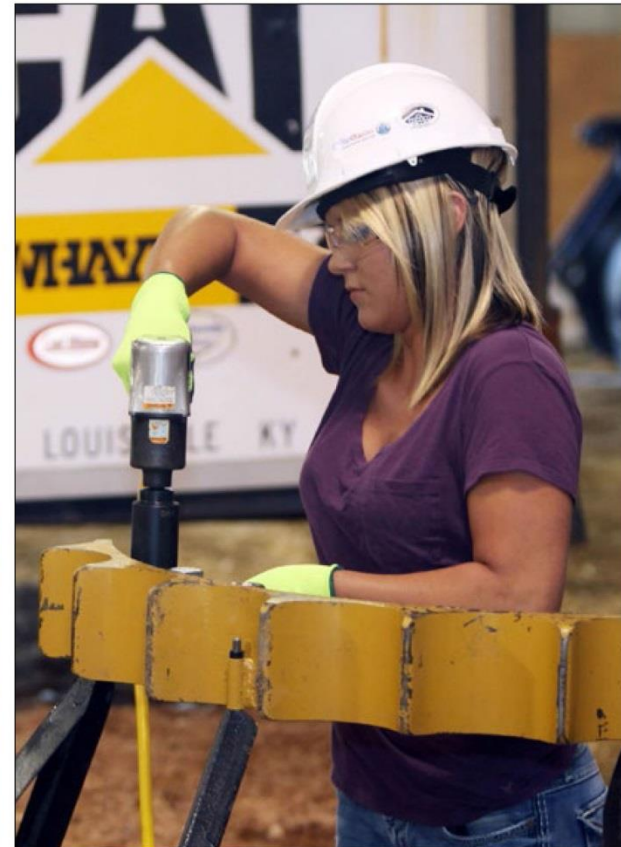
Justin Pate, chief academic officer at MCTC, said getting a start on careers at the secondary level is critical whether a student is preparing for an apprenticeship or just continuing his or her education at the next level.

"I think, at the secondary level, one of the biggest benefits is that students learn, not just a technical skill, but that education has an application," he said. "Laying that foundation of a relevant outcome is as big of a benefit as the technical competencies they master coming out of high school."

Pate added that for those who have started their career training at the high school level, they have such a "leg up" over other students both academically through dual credit classes and in their technical skills, as well.

Winkler said when collaborative efforts are made to ensure the success of students, the outcome is always positive.

"When we put our students first and all the educational partners come together from the secondary, postsecondary and business/industry sectors to work together in a seamless manner, the results



As the TRACK initiative progresses, students ultimately will complete a series of courses requested by each participating business partner in order to receive their pre-apprenticeship certificate.

are always successful," he said. "I think the TRACK program will continue to create this necessary collaboration."

TRACK in the future

As the pilot year draws to an end, Taylor said the program is set to expand from advanced manufacturing to include the construction sector for the 2014-15 school-year. A meeting was held recently that brought construction industry leaders together from across the state to discuss TRACK and how it could benefit the industry.

Taylor said the next step in expanding TRACK into the construction sector is to develop career pathways that will give students credit for courses taken and possibly direct entry into industry training programs. Those meetings will include officials from the Labor Cabinet, trade industries and OCTE.

"In creating these pathways, we are bringing the education and business/industry sectors together to fulfil the needs of both," she said. "We feel as though this expansion is just the beginning for TRACK, and many other areas could be included in the future."